

(1 Samuel) How to Not Fight Back

by David Guzik

David's trust in God and refusal to return evil for evil allowed him to behave wisely in the face of Saul's jealousy and attempts to kill him.

Duration: 32:50

Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:51, 1 Samuel 18:10, 1 Samuel 19:9-10, 2 Samuel 2:4, Psalm 31:15, Romans 13:1

Topics: "Trust In God", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of David playing the harp for King Saul. He highlights the stark contrast between David's submission to God and Saul's violent nature, symbolized by the harp and the spear they respectively held. The speaker emphasizes that David's true submission began when he chose to play for Saul again after the first spear was thrown at him. The sermon explores the significance of David's trust in God despite the danger he faced, and the potential consequences if David had chosen a different path.

Transcript

1 Samuel chapter 18, we're really going to begin at verse 10 this morning. Last week we saw in the book of 1 Samuel the aftermath of this amazing battle between David and Goliath, how Goliath lay dead on the ground in the Valley of Elah, and David had cut off his head and taken that head as a trophy, carried it around with him for a couple of weeks, and showed Saul and anybody else who wanted to see the great thing that the Lord had done through him. We saw that David, after the battle with Goliath, had a private interview with King Saul.

And it was as Jonathan observed David having this conversation with King Saul, that Jonathan's soul was knit to the heart of David, and that David and Jonathan developed this wonderfully close friendship based on their common love for the Lord and their common vision as to what God would do in the kingdom. We saw also how Saul's heart started to be aroused in jealousy against David, because Saul heard the praise and the fame that was coming towards David. There was a hit song going about in Israel.

Saul is slain as thousands, but David as ten thousands. And because of the popularity and the fame and the acclaim that was coming to David, Saul's heart was filled with an envy, with a jealousy, with a fear. That's where we saw in verse 9 last week, it says, So Saul eyed David from that day forward.

Now coming into verse 10, And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played music with his hand as at other times. But there was a spear in Saul's hand.

You get the setting, don't you? Now we're back in the royal courts. We're not out on the field of battle anymore where David has defeated Goliath and where David and Saul had this private interview where David laid out his heart before Saul. Now we're back in the courts of the palace.

And in those royal courts, Saul is afflicted again by that distressing spirit. This distressing spirit was first mentioned in 1 Samuel 16. It came upon Saul, permitted by the Lord, when the spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul.

And as the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, it made, if you will, a spiritual vacuum in Saul's heart. And a distressing spirit came in to fill that vacuum. And it troubled Saul's heart.

And when this was the state of Saul's heart, troubled as it was, some of Saul's assistants, his staff, called the shepherd boy, who was known to be skilled in music, to come in. And David came and he played for Saul. In 1 Samuel 16, when David would play for Saul, God would soothe Saul's heart.

Relief came to him. And he'd be blessed by David's ministry and music and sweet psalms of worship to the Lord. But now it's not like that.

They call for David. And the scene that comes upon here is that Saul is there, and it says there in verse 10 that he prophesied inside the house. But prophesied is probably not the best translation there.

Maybe you're saying, how would a distressing spirit make Saul prophesy? What, he's saying things from the Lord with a distressing spirit upon him? No, not at all. The Hebrew grammar here is used of idle ravings as well as prophecy from the Lord. Saul was simply babbling like a man not in his right mind.

And who knows what he was saying? Maybe he was crying out, pleading with God, and it's disturbed my God, preserve my life. Preserve my life. God, destroy my enemies.

God, keep me on the throne. Who knows what he was babbling? He was beside himself. He wasn't there in his right mind.

In the midst of these idle ravings, David is there and you see the scene, don't you? He's playing music with his hand. There he is, trying to bless Saul and to minister to him at this time. Interesting, isn't it, where it points out in verse 10 where it says, so David played music with his hand.

Those same hands that had held the sling and the stone, those same hands that had struck down Goliath with an expertly aimed shot that made the giant fall. Those same hands that had taken Goliath's sword out of its sheath and brought it down upon the neck of the giant, severing its head. Those same hands that had held Goliath's head in his hands.

Those hands that had been bloodied by war. Those hands could also take up a harp and play beautiful, sweet music unto the Lord. What a remarkable man this man David was.

A man of war, a man of deep inner life before God and worship. David obviously had skillful hands, both in war and in music ministry. But I think more remarkable than the hands of David were the heart that prompted those hands.

You know, most men after the fame that came to David would consider this kind of service beneath them. What, you want me to go play for the king? Get some flunky lounge musician to do that. I'm a general in the army, for heaven's sakes.

I'm the guy who killed Goliath. Why, the women are dancing and singing in my praise. Anybody can play for... get some guy to do that.

Don't you know I'm busy? I've got a photo shoot to go to. David didn't have that kind of heart. You want me to play for the king? I'll go play for the king.

He performed this job of personally ministering to solemn music. David had a precious heart before God. So as David held that harp in his hand and played beautiful music before the Lord and sang those wonderful, sweet songs that he had sung to the sheep, he'll sing them now to Saul, and his hands are playing the music.

But did you see what was in Saul's hand? Look at that in verse 10. But there was a spear in Saul's hand. David held a harp, but there was violence in Saul's hand.

He held a spear. You see it? There's David playing, singing. There's Saul fingering the spear.

He's holding it, sometimes loosely feeling the balance of the weapon in his hands, sometimes moving his hand up and down to see if it's true, to see if it'll fly straight when it's thrown. Other times he's gripping it so tightly that the blood is rushing forth from his fingers, and his fingers are white because he's got such a death grip on the spear. David's using his hands to praise God.

Saul, using his hands to prepare for violence because I'll assure you of something. When you're holding a spear in your hand, you'll use it. That's what happened in verse 11.

And Saul cast the spear. For he said, I will pin David to the wall with it. But David escaped his presence twice.

Saul cast the spear. You hold it in your hand, you'll use it. And as Saul held that spear, the distressing spirit moved upon him.

And instead of receiving ministry from David's music, the distressing spirit prompted Saul to strike out at David. Now please, my friends, don't think that the distressing spirit made Saul do this. Saul couldn't stand back and say, the devil made me do it.

It wasn't me. It was the distressing spirit. No, Saul, it was you.

You were prompted by the distressing spirit. The distressing spirit wanted to steer you, wanted to influence you in a particular way. But it was your choice.

You could choose, will I do this or not? And Saul chose to cast the spear at David. And I think it's so fascinating that the same music ministry that once soothed Saul and made him, as it says in 1 Samuel 16, refreshed and well and gave him relief from the distressing spirit, that same music ministry now has no effect on Saul at all. In fact, Saul responded to David's music ministry with a murder attempt.

And what had changed? You know, was David playing the ancient Hebrew version of industrial thrash metal on the harp and trying to stir up, you know, some angry juices in Saul there? No. Had David's heart

changed? Did the lyrics from the song change from praise to God to, you know, goading on Saul or saying, thank you, Lord, I know you're going to replace this wicked old king and I'm going to be the next one. Thank you, Lord.

It wasn't David's heart that had changed. It wasn't David's music that had changed. It was Saul's heart that had changed.

And Saul refused to receive from David's ministry. And that refusal set the stage for this kind of violence. He drew his arm back and he cast forth the spear.

Now, I can imagine that Saul would have liked to have been thought that it was an accident. This twitch in my arm. I don't know what's up with that.

There was a bee above your shoulder, David, and I thought I'd help you out and get it out of the way. And I thought I saw an enemy behind you or whatever. Whatever excuse, whatever accident.

But there was no accident. There's little doubt that although Saul would have wanted it to seem like an accident, what's it say in verse 11? He said, I will pin David to the wall with it. He didn't want to frighten David.

He didn't want to wound David. When you want to pin somebody to the wall, you want to kill them. You want the spear to go through and land in the wall and deliver a fatal blow completely through the body.

So what happened? Look at verse 11. But David escaped his presence. Saul threw the spear and it missed David.

Perhaps his aim was bad. Maybe his aim was affected by his own disturbed mental and emotional state. Perhaps David saw the spear and he ducked.

Perhaps Saul threw it through and straight, and perhaps David never even saw it coming. Maybe the Lord God supernaturally took that spear and steered it out of the way so that it would sink in the wall instead of in David. Or so maybe it would fall harmlessly to the floor.

We don't know why exactly that spear did not hit David, but it missed, however it happened. And it lay on the floor. And what did David do? David escaped his presence.

Now my name is David, but I don't think that I have the heart of this King David. If it was me that it was being written of, the next verse would probably read something like this. And David picked the spear up off the floor, and he looked Saul in the eye and he said, if Goliath couldn't scare me, you can't.

And if Goliath couldn't kill me, you can't. And David thrust the spear through Saul's heart and pinned him to the wall. I bet that would be written of a lot of us if we were in David's shoes.

But David didn't pick up the spear. He didn't throw it back. He simply escaped his presence.

Could anybody in this room blame David if he had struck back? It could have easily been called self-defense. We could have quoted chapter and verse supporting David in striking back. We could have had a great Bible study on that.

But David had a different heart. It wasn't a matter of what he could get away with. It wasn't a matter of what could be excused.

It was a matter of what God's heart wanted. And David was determined to leave the situation in God's hands and not take the throne himself. God would have to take care of Saul because David would not do it.

Why? Was it because David was lacking in courage? No. Go to the Valley of Elah and look at a big grave. About a nine-foot grave.

And that dead giant on the ground of the Valley of Elah will show to you that there was nothing lacking in the courage of David. In fact, if almost anyone else had thrown that spear against David, I bet you he would have picked it up and in self-defense would have thrust it through the heart of the man who dared throw a spear at that warrior of God and David would have slept just fine that night doing it. But David knew something.

David knew the principle of Romans 13.1 before it was ever written. Romans 13.1 says, David said, Lord, you put Saul on the throne and I know that I'm supposed to be the next king because I have an anointing and I have a promise. But getting Saul out of the way, that's your business, Lord.

I won't touch it because he's an authority appointed by you. Lord, you started his reign. You have to end it.

That was David's heart. David said, let Saul act in the flesh. Let Saul take matters into his own hands.

Let Saul throw spears. David will have none of it. David will trust the Lord.

Now, in doing so, David not only would dodge the spear that could end his life, but David, when he refused to pick up the spear and throw it back at Saul, when he refused to return that spear but left it alone, David preserved himself from a different kind of spear wound. We all know the spear can wound you when it pierces you through and pins you to the wall, right? Did you know the spear can hurt you when you pick it up and return it? In the wound that comes to you when you're pinned through the wall, you bleed and you die. The wound that comes to you when you pick up the spear and return it, filled with bitterness and revenge, and you die.

David dodged both kinds of spears. The author, Gene Edwards, in his wonderful book, *The Tale of Three Kings*, says that David understood something that few of even the wisest men in his own day understood, and even fewer people understand today. Gene Edwards said that David understood that God did not have, but wanted very much to have, men who would live in pain.

God wanted a broken vessel. Now, I didn't even touch on what I believe is the most remarkable word in verse 11. Did you see that? The most remarkable word? It's the last word of the verse.

Twice. David escaped his presence twice. Do you understand what that means? It means that Saul threw the spear twice.

That Saul missed twice. And that after the first miss, David came back and played again for Saul. Now, this is where a lot of us will draw the line.

I don't know, that attitude's in my heart a lot of times. You know, you say, look, I'll sit with a bullseye in my chest once and I'll dodge the spear. I'll even leave that spear on the floor and resist the temptation to throw

it back.

One spear whizzing by my head, that's enough. One miss and I've paid my dues. Once a submission to the Lord, twice a stupidity.

I'm not falling for that. I'd suggest to you that David's submission didn't really begin until he sat back down and played for Saul the second time after the first miss. The first time, you might not know it's coming.

You don't know what you're looking for. You don't know Saul. You don't know how well he throws spears.

You don't know that. The second time, you know. David knew the danger.

Now, he knew Saul's heart. And now, he had to trust God like never before. What was at stake? So, what if David would have been different? I mean, let's say the story went like this.

Let's say that David's there playing for Saul, trying to soothe his distressed spirit. Saul throws the spear. It misses David.

It lands in the wall. And David looks at it and he goes, I'm not going to answer back. I'm leaving.

David leaves. Saul somehow talks him into coming back. It was an accident.

It was this. It was that. Come back.

I'm sorry. David comes back. He starts playing again for Saul.

Saul rears back again, throws it again. And it misses David again. And there it is in the wall a second time.

And let's say this time, David says, forget this. He pulls the spear out of the wall. And he says, Saul, I can see your heart.

And now, I'm going to spear your heart. And boom, he kills him. Now, let's say that would have happened.

You know what? I'd say if that would have happened, then right now I'd be preaching a sermon on, Isn't it wonderful how David held back the first time? And I'd be saying, well, we all understand why David did what he did the second time. And we'd still be singing David's praises. So what was the risk? What was at stake? I don't think God would have kept David from the throne.

I think David would have been king. But you see, if David would have done this, he would have surrendered his destiny to be the greatest king of Israel. He still would be a king, but he would not be the king that the Lord destined him to be.

Gene Edwards, again in that book, Tale of Three Kings. He talks about what it shows about you when you return spears, when you throw them back. What does it show about you? This is what he says.

He says, in doing this small feat of returning thrown spears, you will prove many things. You are courageous. You stand for the right.

You boldly stand against the wrong. You're tough and you can't be pushed around. You will not stand for injustice or unfair treatment.

You are the defender of the faith, the keeper of the flame, the detector of all heresy. You will not be wronged. All of these attributes then combine to prove that you are obviously a candidate for kingship.

Yes, perhaps you are the Lord's anointed after the order of King Saul. David returns the spear. That's what kings do, right? And David is a king.

He's a king like King Saul. Not a king after God's own heart. David wouldn't forfeit that.

Verse 12, Now Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him, but had departed from Saul. Therefore Saul removed him from his presence and made him his captain over a thousand. And he went out and came in before the people.

Saul had the spear. But because David would not pick the spear up off the floor, David didn't have a spear. All he had was the Lord.

Just that. But Saul knew that he was outmatched. All the spears in the world couldn't defeat David because the Lord was with him.

Somehow Saul knew all this and it made Saul afraid of David. By all outward appearance, Saul is in control. Who has the throne? Who has the armies? Who has the spears? If you were a betting man or woman, who would you put your money on? Yet Saul was the one who was afraid because the Lord was with him.

But it wasn't only that the Lord was with David. It was also that the Lord, if you look at verse 12, it says, The Lord had departed from Saul and this made Saul uncomfortable with David. It made it hard for Saul to have David around.

It says, therefore Saul removed him from his presence. And what did he do? Took him out of the palace and he said, I'll make you captain in my army. Here's your promotion, David.

Now, does anybody in this room think that Saul did that to be a blessing to David? No. You know what he's thinking. He's thinking, listen, why should I waste my spear on him? When the Philistine spears are just as sharp, the Philistine swords have just as true edge.

Let the Philistines kill him. I'm going to put him at the head of an elite unit. He's going to go out and make raids and ambushes.

And hopefully a Philistine spear will pin him to the wall. A Philistine sword will deliver the fatal blow. That's what it says there in verse 13.

It says, and he went out and came in before the people. Went out and came in as a Hebrew figure of speech, meaning to conduct military operations. David was out there leading an elite group of troops out conducting operations.

And Saul's hoping, he's praying, Lord, let it come down on his neck. Adam Clark says that this was under pretense of doing him honor when it was in effect only to rid himself of the object of his envy. Saul's jealousy made him manipulative and he was working a secret, hidden agenda on David.

The Lord was with David. Look at verse 15 or actually 13 there. Therefore Saul removed him from his presence and made him captain over a thousand.

He went out and came in before the people. And David behaved wisely in all his ways and the Lord was with him. It isn't easy to behave wisely when spears are being thrown at you.

It isn't easy to behave wisely when you're put out of the palace. It isn't easy to behave wisely when you have powerful and determined enemies. But in the midst of all those terrible circumstances, you can behave wisely in all your ways as the Lord is with you.

That's the key, isn't it? The Lord was with David. And so he could behave wisely. Again, it says there in verse 15, Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him.

Again, he's afraid of him. Why? David's behaving wisely. Saul, why are you afraid of him? I mean, God says, you should be glad.

Here's a captain over a thousand. He's behaving wisely. He's doing great.

Success in everything he does. Saul hates him all the more. He's afraid of him.

Why? Why be afraid if David is behaving wisely? Because Saul's wisdom and David's wisdom were two completely different kinds of wisdom. Saul was wise when it came to spears. He could tell you all about them.

How they feel. How they weigh in your hand. How to throw them.

Saul was an expert when it came to spears and not just the actual kind. David was wise when it came to trusting God. David didn't know much about spears.

When that spear went by his head and landed in the wall, David didn't really know what to do with it. We would all know what to do with it. You yank it out of the wall and you put it in the heart of the person who threw it at you.

But David didn't know. What do I do with this? Lord, what do you want me to do? David was wise when it came to trusting God. Now, I'll tell you that David's wisdom seemed like foolishness to Saul.

But it was real wisdom from God. And something in Saul knew that and was afraid of it. Verse 16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.

Because David behaved wisely and because God was with him, he became even more popular. And David was tempted to use that popularity, I'm sure, against Saul. You know how that works, right? Popularity is power.

Fame is power. And David could have used that against Saul. Could have started stirring things up and planting the seeds and starting that kind of rebellion against him.

David wouldn't touch him. He refused to use his popularity as a spear against Saul because he behaved wisely in all his ways. And he went out and he came in.

He continued the military operations. And God's hand of success was with David, even though Saul was against him. Saul might attack and pain David in any number of ways, but God would not allow Saul to have the victory.

End of the story. You know, when I consider that, it brings me up to what I think is probably the most glorious point in all of this. It would be very easy for me, and if I've done it this way, I apologize, because I don't want you to get this impression from our passage this morning.

It would be very easy for me to paint David as a victim. There he is, poor David. Poor David.

Don't we feel bad for him? What a victim for mean old Saul. You know what I think is glorious about this? I don't believe David ever saw himself as a victim. Now, he looked like a victim.

When you're attacked, you look like a victim. When you turn back and your profile on the wall, all around it, you know, like the knife thrower, there's spears all around it. And half a dozen spears on the floor, you look like a victim.

David was not a victim, and he knew it. Do you know why David was not a victim? Because he behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and so he did not give in to the victim's state of mind. Do you know what the victim's state of mind says? The victim's state of mind says, my fate is in the hands of the one attacking me.

David never believed that. Not for a minute. David knew that his fate was not in the hands of the one attacking him.

His fate wasn't in Saul's hands. His fate was in God's hands. Let Saul do what he will.

God will just use it as a tool in my life. That's where David believed. That's where he stood.

And so you don't look at David and say, oh, what a victim. Oh, poor David. Oh, sad David.

No! David didn't think that of himself. He behaved wisely in all his ways. He knew that his fate was in God's hands, and he could have peace in that.

Unfortunately, that just drove Saul all the more crazy. But still, it's all in the Lord's hands! And God knows what he's doing in the midst of all of it. Now do you see why David is called a man after God's own heart? You know, because the ultimate example of this principle I'm talking about is found in Jesus on the cross.

You look at Jesus, and sometimes, and sometimes preachers present it this way, the feel-sorry for Jesus. There he is, you know, poor Jesus on the cross. And there's something heart-tugging about what Jesus went through on the cross.

But friends, he wasn't a victim. Jesus could have fought a thought, and a legion of angels would have come down and executed the most brutal judgment upon everybody who was opposing him against all his enemies there when he hung on the cross at Calvary. Ages could have come down and lifted him off of the cross and healed all the wounds.

It could have happened with a thought from Jesus' mind. He was not at the mercy of his enemies. Jesus was not a victim.

He was a victor on the cross. And Jesus knew it. That's why his final cry from the cross was, It is finished.

Triumph. You look at that, we realize, Oh, the heart of David. Then we say, Ah, that's the heart of Jesus.

I want that. I know I really want it. Now, it's easy for us to go through this story and look at it and say, Yes, Lord, thank you for speaking to me.

I'm just like David. I'm just like David. Very easy for all of us to do that.

We need to let the Lord speak to our hearts and tell us how and where we're like Saul. Because surely the world isn't just filled with Davids and there's no Sauls out there. And surely if we look in the mirror, God will show us where there's some of Saul in us.

We need God to work this deep in our heart. To be like David. Not because it's like David, but because David was like Jesus.

We need to be like Jesus. Who was not a victim. Who certainly did not return the spear when it was thrown at him.

But was the victor in everything that God put before him. It's a heavy work and I need it in my life. And I trust that there's a few of you here who need it in your lives.

So let's pray and ask God to do that. We thank you, Lord, for your word. Father, we ask that you do two things in our hearts.

First of all, Lord, we pray that you would forgive us and cleanse us for the ways that we're like Saul. And God, we pray that you would strengthen us to be like David. Not for David's sake, Lord, but for Jesus'.

Because in every glorious way that David gives us an example to follow, it's simply because that's what Jesus did for us. And we want to receive the work that Jesus did on our behalf. We want to receive the victory that he won for us.

Thank you, Lord, for the son of David and his great triumph on the cross. Lord, bring healing. Bring your work.

Bring your love in our lives through you. Work with hearts as we partake of communion together. In Jesus' name.

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